

THE BEACON

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THE WALKING HOUSE

BY MABEL S. MERRILL

IN SIX CHAPTERS

MARJORIE WILLIAMS

Chapter I

WYMAN BURNEY'S eyes were shining as he looked at that little house on wheels. He had built it himself with some help from a big fellow, Thaxter Fales, who worked at the lumber camp behind the hill. Thaxter was sixteen, and Wyman, who was twelve, felt sure that the older boy knew pretty much everything worth knowing.

"Anyhow, it's the best playhouse we ever had," Wyman said to himself.

Then he turned to see why his sister Star was running up in that excited way from the rural mail box that stood by the drive in front of the old tumbledown farmhouse. She had a letter in her hand. Their four-year-old sister Celia was running after Star, while a stray collie dog with brown eyes was frisking in circles around the two of them.

"It's from mother," gasped Star, "and you never in your life heard anything so wonderful as what's in it!"

Wyman laid his hammer back in the doorway of the little house and took the letter eagerly.

Mother and Father Burney were sixty miles away at Denslow Hill, where they were employed by Captain Denslow who owned the big paper mills there. In the absence of their parents the three children were living with Mrs. Huldah Ann Reed, in whose house up here in the timber country the whole Burney family had lived before the father and mother went away.

Wyman's eyes grew wider and wider as he read that letter.

"We are going away again," wrote Mother Burney, "but don't be dismayed at that because this time we have leave to take you with us. Captain and Mrs. Denslow and some friends are going to

California to stay until next spring. They want us to go with them because your father can drive all kinds of cars and always find out what ails any engine when it won't work. I am to help with the cooking and other things when we camp by the wayside, and shall take charge of the California bungalow when we arrive in that land of roses."

At this point Wyman looked up at Star in a sort of daze. "A camping trip all the way to California," he muttered; "and they're going to take us! I don't see how a thing like that can be true."

"Of course it's true," exclaimed Star. "Read on and you'll see. I couldn't believe my eyes, either, when I first read it."

The letter went on: "Now, how do you suppose we are going to travel? Well, Captain Denslow's party is going in a wonderful motor house, with two cars following to carry the luggage and camping outfit. Your father is to drive one of those cars and we are to ride in it, sleeping in tents at night. We shan't mind being a bit crowded."

Wyman laughed at this. For the sake of going on a trip like that he would have been willing to ride on the running-board all the way. The last part of the letter told them how to get down from the timberlands to Denslow Hill in time to join the party.

"You know," wrote Mother, "that our good Huldah Ann's brother, Silas Reed, has an old automobile that the lumbermen call the 'Walking Junk Shop' because it looks that way and goes rather like a snail. But even at a walk it will get you over that rough sixty miles that

lies between us. Silas has been such a good neighbor to us that I'm sure he will be willing to bring you down. We start on the twenty-first of August; that is a whole week away, but be sure you start as soon as possible after you get this letter. The Captain might decide on an earlier date and I can't ask him to wait for you, or take any trouble about your getting here, because it is such a great favor that he will let you go at all. So we shall depend entirely on Silas and the Walking Junk Shop."

Suddenly Wyman flung the letter on the ground and looked wildly at Star.

"We can't go," he burst out. "Silas Reed's Walking Junk Shop walked off over the river bank at Thompson's Bluffs yesterday. It's in fifteen feet of water up there, and all of a smash!"

"Well, if Silas can't take us down to Denslow Hill somebody else can," urged Star faintly.

"Who can? There aren't any neighbors but Silas, and the Junk Shop was the only automobile up here in the timber. There are nothing but woods-roads for twenty miles around."

"We can go with a horse, then," cried Star.

"Whose horse? Huldah Ann's old Pete died in the winter and Silas doesn't keep any. There are horses at the lumber camps, of course, but they never would spare one to get us down to Denslow Hill this week. It's a rush time with them and they don't care whether we get there or not, 'tisn't likely!"

Star gave it up at that and sat down beside the dropped letter, her face in her hands. Little Celia came and plumped down beside her while the stray collie snuggled against them and looked at them out of two loving, troubled brown

eyes. There was no way out, as far as they could see. They would have to stay right here in the tumbledown farmhouse and let father and mother go off to California without them.

"If Captain Denslow knew how we felt," whispered Star, "don't you suppose he would send up one of his own automobiles to get us? He has so many!"

"Mother won't hear of asking him," muttered Wyman shakily. "You see what she says about not bothering him. If we began bothering, he would probably say we couldn't go at all."

There was silence after that till Thaxter Fales came walking around the lumber pile in front of which the little house on wheels had been built. "What's the matter?" he asked, looking down at the dismal heap of three children and a brown-eyed collie dog.

They told him the whole story and showed him their mother's letter. He shook his head and said it was a chance they ought not to miss.

"See here," he added, "what's the need of your howling over the loss of the Walking Junk Shop when you have a Walking House of your own right here?"

Star opened her mouth to say indignantly that they were not howling, then she wiped her eyes and stared at Thaxter. What did he mean? They all got up and stared at the playhouse on wheels, quite as if they had never seen it before.

It was built of waste lumber which Huldah's brother Silas could get for almost nothing at the sawmill down in the hollow. You could always find a few straight pieces that were good to use; the rest would do for firewood. The boys had built Huldah a whole row of nice new chicken coops and she had then given them leave to use what they wanted to make that little house. They had built it on some stout old ox-cart wheels which they had found in the barn. It was a sort of imitation of the sawmill shanties of which there was a whole village down in the hollow. Those little houses were always moved about on wheels with a stout pair of horses. The children often saw them going up and down with the smoke still coming out of the piece of pipe that made a chimney for the little stove inside.

The playhouse had a stove, too, a galley stove that had been around the world on one of Captain Denslow's sailing ships in the old days. He had given it to their father for use about some of the camps when Daddy Burney was working for him up here in the timber lands.

Star went and looked in at the open door of that little house. "Do you mean we could ride in it clear down to Denslow Hill?"

"Why not? You would be warm and comfortable nights and you could cook your meals over that stove. Silas Reed's old ox could haul it — you know Job,

the one that has lost his mate and gets his living in the back pasture. He can haul as much as two horses, if he is old, and you can leave him with Silas's brother when you get down there. He lives half a mile this side of Denslow Hill."

"It would be a Walking House all right, if old Job was pulling it," laughed Wyman. "But we have a week to get there. Come on and help us talk to Huldah Ann, Thaxter."

Huldah Ann just held up her hands in horror at the first mention of the plan. But Thaxter argued the matter. "You see," he urged, "if they had a house with them they would be all right if it rained or if it came night while they were in the woods and they couldn't get to a real house."

"They *must* get to a real house," declared Huldah Ann firmly. "These chil-

dren have been left in my care, Thaxter Fales, and I'm not going to have them carried off by catamounts or whatever creatures go prowling about in the big woods at night. How far can they travel in a day with that old ox and a chicken house on wheels?"

"Twenty miles, easy. Old Job is slow but he keeps going."

"Well, it is twenty miles down to my Cousin Lucilla's house. They could stay there the first night. The next day they can get to the town of Grosville where everybody knows us and anybody will take them in. The next night they will be with their father and mother at Denslow Hill. You are sure this outfit of yours will hold, wheels and all?"

"Yes, ma'am. The Walking House is sound as a nut," declared the boy, — and then they knew they were to go.

(To be continued)



Rev. A. E. Kristjansson and Confirmation Class at Otto, Manitoba

A Unitarian Bearer of Good Tidings

By Gertrude Grotophorst

MOST of us who know anything of the work of Dr. Wilfred Grenfell feel that he is indeed a bearer of good tidings. But I wonder how many of us know that our own Unitarian Church has a man whose work is almost as thrilling as Dr. Grenfell's. An article in *The Unitarian News Letter* tells about the work of our missionary to the northland, Rev. A. E. Kristjansson.

Mr. Kristjansson's work is being carried on in the Manitoba Lake Region, and his parish extends down into our own United States at times, as his trusty Ford carries him to Mountain, North Dakota, occasionally. Surely he is doing his part to spread abroad the good tidings of Freedom, Fellowship, and Character in Religion.

For over twenty-five years Mr. and Mrs. Kristjansson and their family have been ministering to the Icelanders (and

to others who are interested) in this region. These people, he says, have a "high average intelligence, sturdy uprightness of character and a natural love of liberty." And they respond so eagerly to Unitarian teachings that their minister feels that it "must be only a matter of a very short time until they will all be Unitarians."

At first the Kristjanssons went to the little town of Gimla. Then a group of people on the shores of Lake Manitoba sixty miles away needed their services. So it was arranged that they should live half the year at Gimla, and half the year at Lake Manitoba. Very simply and vividly Mr. Kristjansson describes their first journey from Gimla to their other home:

"We packed our goods on a lumber wagon drawn by a team of horses. The family went in a dilapidated old buggy

that I had picked up for ten dollars, drawn by a little pony mare. As the route lay through a roadless, and to a large extent uninhabited, country, covered with bush and swamp and muskeg, we had to wait in the fall for the ground to freeze before we could move. In the spring, we had to go west before the frost was out of the ground. We did this for two years."

At the end of that time, another minister from Iceland came to Gimla, so the Kristjanssons moved to the Manitoba Lake settlement. But since he could not make ends meet by preaching only, he decided to try farming. As he says:

"I took up a homestead fifteen miles from Lundar, bought a shack three miles from my land and had it moved for \$125. Into this I moved my family May 8, 1912. The day was warm and sunny and we were expecting continuous warm weather. When we awoke in the morning there was a raging blizzard outside, and the snow had sifted through the cracks in the wall and lay in heaps on the floor. I dressed and tucked up the wife and children as well as I could, while I put up a little stove and hunted around in the snow for some wood to make a fire.

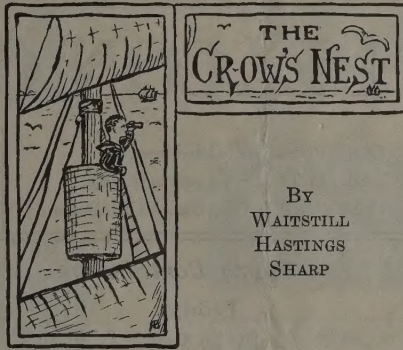
"We set to work full of hope and enthusiasm and struggled on that homestead for four years.

"I worked on the farm every day except Sunday. On Sunday morning I hitched up my pony and drove to my preaching stations. The shortest distance was eight miles and the longest twenty-five. I had to be away from home often several days at a time, leaving the wife and children to manage there in the meantime." After four years, the family moved their house thirteen miles to be closer to a railroad.

"I lifted the house on skids," says Mr. Kristjansson, "gathered all the oxen I could get, hitched ten yoke of them to the house and off we went. This was in January. It took us a week to make the thirteen miles."

But farming and the ministry did not work well together. One suspects that a man with less consecration and determination never would have tried it at all. At any rate, Mr. Kristjansson decided to give up farming. At this opportune time, he was granted a raise in salary and was also elected to the Provincial Legislature.

Since then the work has gone on, and new groups have been organized in widely separated places. Although Mr. Kristjansson cannot be in all of them at one time, the people carry on with only an occasional visit from him. He is no longer a circuit preacher, but has become a missionary whose field extends into Saskatchewan, Alberta, and North Dakota as well as Manitoba.



BY
WAITSTILL
HASTINGS
SHARP

HOW many of you have read the *Lend-a-Hand Leaflet* published monthly by our friend Annie Florence Brown at the offices of the Lend-a-Hand Society, 101 Tremont Street, Boston? You ought ALL to read it — and you would if you knew that it is as full of rescues and records as the Journal of the Lighthouse Keepers' Association — if they have one.

And you who are reading these words ought now to drop this *Beacon* like a red-hot potato and go to your superintendent and ask him, or telegraph him, if necessary: "Have we a Lend-a-Hand Society in our school?" And if he says "No," you ought to say, "We want to find out about Dr. Edward Everett Hale who wrote the 'Man Without a Country' and who founded the Lend-a-Hand Society. We want to know why the Lend-a-Hand Society is organized today; what it is doing; to whom it is reaching out a helping hand with books for boys and girls in the southern mountains, and tiny clothes for mothers to dress their new babies in, and medicine for doctors in Labrador. We want to know what place the Lend-a-Hand has in the great Christian heart of Sir Wilfred Grenfell."

There ought to be a Lend-a-Hand club in every school to which *The Beacon* goes.

Every boy and girl growing up in our church schools should have a chance to be a Lend-a-Hand member.

No one has asked me to write these words. Miss Brown will be surprised when she sees them. I write them from the bottom of my heart because I think that the Lend-a-Hand Society is just one of thousands of expressions of faith in human nature and love for suffering people.

From the Hindu

"Bring me a pod from yonder tree,"

Ammi said to his son one day,

"Open the shell and what do you see?"

"Seeds just ready to blow away."

"Open a seed and what is inside?"

"Nothing at all that I can see";

"Nothing, my son?" wise Ammi cried,

"Within dwells a beautiful, mighty tree!"

E. E. BROWN.

ple. I mean this: The very fact that the Lend-a-Hand is organized to help people means that those who founded it and those who keep it going today founded it and keep it going out of their faith that human beings are worth a lended hand.

Think this over. Here we are looking into the depths of one of the greatest questions in the world. If you ask yourself, "Why do we have hospitals?", the first answer is: To care for sick and injured people. But behind this obvious first answer stands a second and a deeper question: WHY do we care about sick and injured people? Because we believe that each person ought to live as long as he can, for life is an opportunity for happiness, and human happiness is an end in itself. People ought to be happy. People have a right to life at its best. So we who are well and uninjured build great hospitals and employ doctors and nurses to save people from sickness and death.

Why do we have libraries? So that every one can read. But WHY should every one be given a chance to sit at a lighted desk and hold a book before his eyes and think?

Why do the 110,000,000 people of the United States employ 1,000,000 teachers and 1,000,000 other people to spend \$2,000,000,000 each year on our 27,000,000 American school children who are using buildings and equipment worth \$6,000,000,000? So that the 27,000,000 school children can learn. But WHY should they learn? Why shouldn't they "just grow," as did Topsy in "Uncle Tom's Cabin"?

It's hard, isn't it, to look up from our work long enough to ask ourselves, "Really, why am I on my job?" I wonder how often older people — our fathers and mothers, doctors and nurses, firemen and policemen and teachers and park directors — really think things right through. Perhaps they are too busy.

But when they do think things out, I am sure they must agree that: "Human beings — living, learning, happy people — are worth more than anything else in the whole world."

And I think that Annie Florence Brown, Secretary of the Lend-a-Hand Society, must agree with them. Write her and see.

A schoolboy paraphrased the line "To bicker down the valley," from Tennyson's poem, "The Brook," as follows: "To have an undignified quarrel in a low place among the hills."

Another boy, given the line from "Lochinvar," "He stayed not for brake," paraphrased it: "He never stopped for a mechanical contrivance to reduce speed by means of friction."

THE BEACON CLUB

The Editor's Post Box

Dear B. C. Members: I hope you will not be so busy with your new Christmas books that you cannot take time to enjoy Miss Merrill's new serial which begins in this number. And there is another serial coming which I am sure you will like — but I cannot tell you more about that just now.

THE EDITOR.

MILFORD, N. H.

Dear Editor: I belong to the Sunday School at Milford, N. H. Our church school is not very large but has some nice boys and girls in it. We have *The Beacon* every Sunday. I like the stories and the puzzles. I should like to belong to the Club. I am seven years old and in the Second Grade.

WINSTON C. SEARS.

72 SOUTH PLEASANT ST.,
SHARON, MASS.

Dear Beacon Club Editor: I am eight years old. I wish I could have a pin for my little brother. He is too small to send for one. He is two years old.

I go to Sunday school in Sharon. My Sunday-school teacher's name is Miss Phillips. I like her very much. Our minister's name is Mr. Pierce. My sister's name is Pauline; she is very chubby and just like a joke.

Yours truly,
HELEN SHEPARD.

722 WEST CHESTNUT ST.,
BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

Dear Editor: I am very interested in *The Beacon Club*. I am also a member of the Unitarian Church. Last Sunday we voted on having red and blue for our class colors. Our minister is Rev. Mr. Holloway. My teacher is Miss Postel. I am twelve years old and a Girl-Reserve. I shall soon be a Campfire Girl.

Sincerely yours,
LUCY BUCHHOLZ.

15 DOBSON RD.,
EAST BRAintree, MASS.

Dear Editor: I am a member of the *Beacon Club* but I have lost my pin. I should be very glad to have you send me another. I go to All Soul's Church School and have not missed a Sunday for four years. I am thirteen years old and should like a girl of my age to correspond with me.

Sincerely yours,
LOUISE D. DONALDSON.

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

Our Young Contributors

Teddy

By LO VAN

I did not like T. Roosevelt
For he did so like to fight,
And when I hear an ugly growl
I run with all my might.

And then when I am safe at home
And under Grandpa's bed
I say — "I'll come and bite you
If you dare to call me Ted."

Now if you want me for a chum,
To always be your "steady"
You'll always find me at your side
If you kindly call me "Teddy."

I'm just a little Boston Bull
And I cannot tell my name,
But when I hear *you* call it
I know it just the same.

If it must be "Ted" or "Teddums"
Or some other foolish name,
I'll not come or even budge
'Cause I'll be very lame.

But when you call me "Teddy"
My lameness all will leave,
And I'll come bounding back to you
So you will never grieve.

The Tale of a Cat

By RHODA ELLIOTT (AGE 8)

There was a little cat that went to town;
She bought herself a fine nightgown;
When she got home she put it on
And went to bed and slept till dawn.

She woke in the morning so early and bright

She thought she had slept a day and a night.

She went down stairs and looked under the chair

And there was her kitten, — it gave her a scare.

Most of the family were at the parlor window watching the king and queen ride by. Suddenly the mother turned to her daughter. "Where's your auntie?" "Upstairs," came the reply, "waving her hair." "Mercy," exclaimed the mother, "can't we afford a flag?"

—*Boston Transcript.*

Puzzlers

Enigma

I am composed of 20 letters.
My 18, 17, 20 is a wise bird.
My 5, 11, 12 is a serious promise.
My 19, 13, 14, 5, 16 is a fruit, also a girl's name.
My 7, 1, 6, 2 is a pronoun used by Quakers.
My 15, 10, 2, 6 is part of the body.
My 3, 8, 11, 9, 7 is said to walk by night.
My 4 is a personal pronoun.
My *whole* is from the one hundred and forty-seventh Psalm. J. W. M.

Beheaded Words

1. Behead a medicine and leave a floor covering.
2. Behead a kind of boat and leave a domestic animal.
3. Behead money and leave a tree.
4. Behead a building and leave a piece of furniture.
5. Behead an article of food and leave a way to gain knowledge.
6. Behead a tract of land and leave a part of the body.

—*Scattered Seeds.*

Answer to Christmas Crossword Puzzle

Y	U	L	E	T	R	E	E
	S	A		M		E	D
F		D		E		D	M
A	S		A	S	A		F
C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A
E	E		M	A	E		T
S		B		G		F	N
	P	A		E		I	S
T	O	Y	S		T	R	I

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